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DOL/ILAB FOR TINA MCCARTER, DRL/IL FOR TU DANG

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SUBJECT: RWANDA - REPORT ON WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

REF: SECSTATE 158223

¶1. (U) Post submits the following information for the 2007 Report on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The Government of Rwanda (GOR) continues to make progress in its efforts to implement its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Programs and policies described in the 2006 report are still ongoing, with significant updates outlined below. Despite the challenges of child labor and the extreme poverty that is one of the problem's underlying causes, the GOR has made addressing the issue a national priority.

¶2. (U) Requested information is keyed to reftel.

A) In July, the GOR adopted a strategic plan to implement its National Policy for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children, which includes strategies to combat child labor. Both a draft penal code that includes prohibitions against child exploitation and a draft law on child trafficking went before Parliament in the spring of this year and are now under consideration by requisite parliamentary committees. On the local level, some districts established and began to implement bylaws preventing child labor, and child labor reduction benchmarks have been integrated into district performance contracts. (Note: President Paul Kagame personally signs performance contracts with each district mayor, and each is evaluated on his or her district's yearly performance. End note.)

B) The Ministry of Public Service, Skills Development and Labor (MIFOTRA) employed labor inspectors in Rwanda's 30 districts (one inspector per district). Inspectors received training on child labor issues from NGOs including UNICEF and "Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia Together" (KURET), and continued to issue warnings and levy fines against those illegally employing children.

NGOs provided local government child development committees with training on monitoring child labor and sensitized parents and children on child labor issues through these committees. School-based programs included teacher training on child labor monitoring and counseling and the formation of student clubs to raise awareness of social issues including child labor and HIV/AIDS.

UNICEF gave 300 members of the Rwandan National Police training on child protection procedures, in addition to standard government training they receive on child and family protection and gender-based violence.

C) The GOR continued its collaboration with KURET to withdraw or prevent children from exploitive labor through the provision of training and prevention services. Joint efforts between the GOR and NGOs directed toward street children

included prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs. In conjunction with NGOs, the GOR worked to develop a child poverty profile to determine which vulnerable children would have access to a social support package including health, educational, justice, and psychosocial services.

The GOR continued to support a demobilization and reintegration program for combatants, including children. During the year, 50 children who had served as soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) received care and reintegration preparation from the Muhazi demobilization center for children in the Eastern Province. There were some reports of a DRC-based armed group recruiting children in refugee camps to be used as combatants or forced laborers. The GOR sent counselors to these camps to educate refugee populations on the dangers of child soldiering and to urge them to report and cease recruitment efforts.

D) The National Advisory Committee on Child Labor (comprised of Ministries of Gender and Family Promotion, Education, and Labor; the National Commission on Human Rights; the national police; trade unions; and NGOs) met regularly to provide guidance and technical assistance to the GOR on child labor issues and to develop a national child labor policy. As part of MIFOTRA's five-year action plan addressing the problem of child labor, a survey on the extent, details, and causes of child labor in Rwanda was developed jointly by MIFOTRA, the Rwandan Bureau of Statistics, ILO/IPEC and several NGOs, and will be implemented in 5000 households in the coming months. The development of a national child labor monitoring system is another goal of the plan.

The GOR Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, adopted in November, specifically prioritizes the elimination of child labor in its public sector capacity and employment promotion component.

Education is compulsory through primary school or until age 13. While primary school fees were abolished, most parents still had to pay unofficial fees to support basic school operations. However, children were not dismissed from school for their parents' failure to pay such fees. A survivors' fund assisted with the secondary school fees for school-age genocide survivors.

According to the Ministry of Education, 92.4 percent of primary school-age children were enrolled in school.

E) NGOs cited resource constraints and the scope of poverty in Rwanda as the greatest challenges to the elimination of child labor, but reported strong will on the part of the GOR to combat child labor and "overwhelming support" from the government for their activities despite these challenges. While the results of the national survey on child labor will not be available until 2008, a recent joint study carried out by MIFOTRA and the Bureau of Statistics in the pilot district of Karongi showed a drop in child labor, from 9.6 percent in 2002 to 3 percent in 2007. In a June meeting with the Ambassador, the Minister of MIFOTRA described an earlier GOR study which indicated that approximately 450,000 children (around 9 percent of the country's four million children under 18) were engaged in child labor. Recent preliminary reports indicate that national numbers continued to decline. In September, a UNICEF official stated the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in Rwanda had measurably declined (exact figures were unavailable).

More than 85 percent of the Rwandan workforce is engaged in subsistence agriculture, and child labor in this sector persisted. Children also worked as household domestics, in small companies, and in the brick-making industry. Updated statistics on the incidence and nature of child labor across labor sectors were not available.

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